

COMIC SHOP NEWS

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ULTRAFORCE • AVENGERS

Malibu and Marvel Share Team Spirit

Coordinating the meeting of two heroes from different comic book universes is difficult enough. But when the meeting in question involves two superteams featuring some of the most powerful heroes from their respective universes, making everything run smoothly is a job that requires almost super-heroic effort on its own!

Don't take our word on it, though: ask Glenn Herdling, Angel Medina, Warren Ellis, and George Perez, the creators responsible for the two-part crossover that begins in *Avengers/UltraForce* and continues into *UltraForce/Avengers*.

Ultraverse editor Hank Kanalz points out to readers that this isn't just another crossover. After all, he points out, "Marvel loved working with us so much, they bought the company!" On a more serious note, he points out that "this crossover is a true collaborative effort. Mark Gruenwald and Ralph Macchio have been extremely supportive and cooperative, allowing the new kids on the block to play with their toys. We all want to put out a fun, exciting crossover, and I think we've done it!

You get the best of both worlds. Marvel's *Avengers/UltraForce* is what I consider a classic Marvel crossover concept—the kind that I grew up eagerly anticipating. Malibu's *UltraForce/Avengers* takes that tradition, and puts the

unique Ultraverse spin on it."

"A project this 'meaty' is what separates the boys from the men," artist Angel Medina said, who handles the art honors for the first installment of the two-part crossover. Ironically, one of the things that inspired him to attempt such a demanding project was his fond memories of the hero-packed superteam books of George Perez—and now Perez is working with him on the series, illustrating the second book. "Being that he was one of my biggest inspirations, a project like this is a dream come true," Medina said.

"This is turning out to be so much more than a crossover," Hank Kanalz added. "Warren is writing a tight, action-packed, character-packed forty-eight page saga that sucks you in from the first page."

"Nothing that you expect to happen will happen," Warren Ellis says about the two-issue storyline. "What first attracted me to the project was the idea of working with George Perez because we are so different. George energized and redefined the concept of the team book."

If there's any one thing that unites almost every creator of the series, it's effusive praise for artist George Perez. Writer Glenn Herdling also credits Perez with inspiring him to get involved with this project. "Several years before I came into the industry, I was really

bummed to learn that the planned Justice League/Avengers crossover had been scrapped," Herdling said. "But now I'm on the ground floor of the greatest superhero team-up of all time—the Avengers and UltraForce! And boy, I'm having a blast!"

"The two *Avengers/UltraForce* books should be quite interesting, in that they're not so much a continued story as a continuing story," Marvel's Mark Gruenwald said. "We take a more classical approach to our book, hitting the Avengers versus the UltraForce as pawns in a game played to win one of the Infinity Gems. Our Malibu counterparts take a more radical approach, co-mingling the teams in an imaginative reality-bending jumble. Fans should be palpitating to see both renditions of our two universes tango."

When asked if it took a great deal of work to coordinate the two continuities, Hank Kanalz confirmed that, "yes, it was a challenge. Marvel has such a rich history, and things are relatively young and unexplored with the Ultraverse. Marrying these two universes for these two specials was quite a project! But by bringing in someone brand new to the Ultraverse, I think we were able to capture part of what it must be like to discover a new universe."

The storyline grows out of recent happenings in the

Ultraverse—happenings that have come about due to the machinations of Loki, who travelled from the Marvel Universe to the Ultraverse during the Godwheel limited series. Loki manages to manipulate the two teams into a battle royale on the Godwheel; if he can trick them into destroying one another, he can take control of the Ultraverse... and from there, he can make plans to launch his final attack on the Marvel Universe as well! As to which characters are featured in the storyline—well, according to Kanalz, "I think we feature at least one of everyone's favorites...they might not appear in the way readers expect, but they're there!"

The story doesn't end there; while the super-groups' super-conflicts will come to an end in these two forty-eight page books, the big picture will continue to develop in the Black September story arc that runs through all the Ultraverse titles. In this storyline, the separation between the Ultraverse and the Marvel Universe is blurred a bit more as Juggernaut joins the Ultraverse superteam the Exiles, Spider-Man meets Spider-Prime, and Rune battles against Adam Warlock. Will any characters from one universe making a new home in the other universe? "Now that would be telling too much!" Kanalz said. "Siren, Night Man, and Kevin Green will be stuck in

the Marvel Universe, each for a different amount of time. Siren's mini-series takes place in the Marvel Universe, in which she's hired to assassinate War Machine. Kevin (Prime) Green meets Spider-Man, and that has a profound effect on his life! And Night Man will be popping up where you least expect him..."

Avengers/UltraForce, a \$3.98 comic with a metallic foil-stamped cover, is scheduled for August 17th release; *UltraForce/Avengers*, a \$3.98 comic with a wraparound cover by George Perez, follows in late August.

by CLIFF BIGGERS

Dark Horse Presents⁵

A hundredth issue is cause for celebration for any comic book company—but Dark Horse isn't satisfied with an ordinary celebration. Instead, the company is commemorating the 100th issue of *Dark Horse Presents* with not one, but five different anniversary issues, each featuring some of the biggest names in comics.

Geof Darrow, Frank Miller, Paul Chadwick, Bernie Wrightson, Eddie Campbell, Paul Chadwick, Mike Mignola, Dave Stevens—all these and more are represented in the five thirty-page comics that form *Dark Horse Presents 100 #s 1-5*. Rather than offering an enhanced cover that would add to the cost without adding to the enjoyment, Dark Horse chose to offer more of what made DHP famous to start with: story and art.

The celebration begins on August 3rd, with the release of *Dark Horse Presents 100 #1*. Between the Frank Miller-Lynn Varley front cover and the Dave Stevens back cover, fans will find an eight-page Miller story entitled "Lance Blastoff"; a one-page story by Dave Stevens introducing his new heroine, Mimi Rodin; a six-page story by Renee French; a new autobiographical strip by Harvey Pekar and Joe Sacco; a new Heartbreakers story by Anina Bennett, Paul Guinan, and Todd Herman; a four-pager by Xeric Award-winner Jon Lewis; and two pages of Milk and Cheese by Evan Dorkin.

Dark Horse Presents 100 #2 kicks off with a Hellboy cover by Bernie Wrightson and Matt Hollingsworth, which complements a new ten-page Hellboy story by Mike Mignola. Other contributors to the issue include Roberta Gregory, who offers a six-page Bitchy Bitch story; an eight-pager by Paul Pope; a new Fat Dog Mendoza story by Scott Musgrove; a one-pager starring Devil Chef by Jack Pollock; and a three-page Alec story by Eddie Campbell. This issue is slated for August 10th release.

A week later, *Dark Horse Presents 100 #3* debuts with a Concrete cover by Geof Darrow and Lynn Varley; inside, Paul Chadwick presents a new fourteen-page Concrete story; Megan Kelso offers a six-page story entitled "Whistle and Queenie"; Harvey Pekar takes us to "Breakfast at Billy's"; and James Strumg, Dan Savage, and Jason Waskey present a six page autobiographical tale, "Faggot's Story".

Dave Gibbons's Martha Washington cover kicks off *Dark Horse Presents 100 #4*; it leads into a new six-page Martha Washington tale, "Attack of the Flesh-Eating Monsters," by Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons. Black Cross returns in a new eight-page story by Chris Warner; Pekar and Sacco contribute a two-page strip; Ellen Forney chronicles her meeting with Tom Waits; Ed Brubaker and Pat McEown contribute "Bird Dog"; and Brian Sendelbach and Rick Geary each contribute short pieces. This issue is scheduled for August 24th release.

The celebration comes to an end on August 31st with the release of *Dark Horse Presents 100 #5*. Behind the Michael Allred Madman cover, readers will find an eight-page Monkeyman and O'Brien story by Art Adams; a collaborative effort by Jeff Smith and Paul Pope; a new eight pager by Mario Hernandez; a two-page Milk & Cheese piece by Evan Dorkin; and an introductory Frankenstein PI tale by Rich Hedden and Mike McPhillips.

Each installment of *Dark Horse Presents 100* is priced at \$2.50, making it possible for fans to enjoy over 150 pages of comics by some of the industry's most popular talent for only \$12.50. And the fun doesn't stop there; some of these creators, such as Bernie Wrightson and Paul Pope, will continue to contribute to upcoming issues of *Dark Horse Presents* as well as editor Bob Schreck sets out to make *Dark Horse Presents* the one anthology title that no fan will want to miss.

by CLIFF BIGGERS



COMIC SHOP NEWS

8.9.95

Printed on Recycled Newsprint

From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet

Exploring the Justice League's Sworded Past

Fans are accustomed to seeing Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, the Green Lantern, and other DC heroes in a contemporary setting—and in some cases, fans have even had a chance to see these heroes in various historic settings as well. However, in *League of Justice*, a two-issue Elseworlds miniseries, fans will see these heroes and others in a very unfamiliar setting: a grand fantasy world in the tradition of Tolkien, Donaldson, Weis, and others!

The series, which is sure to appeal to fantasy gamers just as strongly as it appeals to longtime comics fans, chronicles the odyssey of a group of teenagers into a strange medieval world where magic exists, swords are the preferred



weapons, and no one has ever heard of superheroes. Soon, these teens are caught up in a malevolent plot to destroy the forces of good forever—and the only way they can help prevent this from coming about is by organizing this land's strangely familiar magical heroes into a League of Justice.

League of Justice is written and pencilled by Ed Hannigan, with Dick Giordano handling the inking honors. Each forty-eight page issue is priced at \$5.95; look for the first half of the two-parter on September 28th.



©1995 DC Comics

Murder Is the Disease, Typhoid Is the Cure

Thus far, fans have gotten to know Typhoid Mary only as a villain who plagues Daredevil—but when she graduates to her own limited series this fall, fans will see the multi-personalities Typhoid Mary as a reluctant heroine. Mary's enemy this time around is an unknown serial killer who has been preying on prostitutes; in order to track him down, Mary has to delve deep into the darker side of urban life. *Typhoid*, a four-issue limited series in the Marvel Select format, is written by Ann Nocenti and illustrated by John Van Fleet; the \$3.95 first issue is scheduled for September 28th release. Shortly before the series debuts, Marvel will offer a *Typhoid Mary Poster*, also illustrated by John Van Fleet; look for the \$4.95 poster on September 14th.

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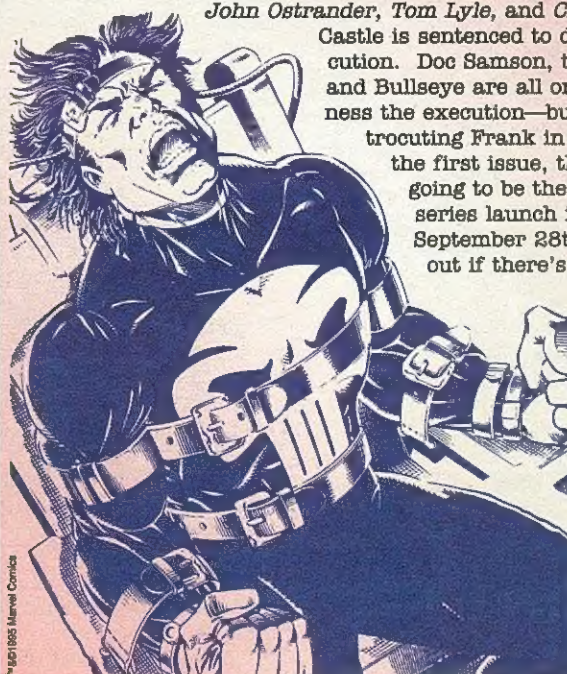
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& Ward Batty**
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CSNsider

Malibu has announced that it has successfully negotiated a deal with Galoob Toys to offer UltraForce figures to comic specialty shops before they appear in mass-market stores—and even better, the comic shop toy assortments will contain an exclusive limited edition action figure available nowhere else. The initial assortment will include Prime, Prototype, Night Man, Ghoul, Topaz, NM-E, and Hardcase; look for 'em this fall... Fantasy fans take note: Middle Earth becomes the home territory for a new collectible card game next year... Flashback Comics publisher Steve Busti has announced that his company is adding a new fantasy/sf title this fall, *Fantastic Worlds*; contributors to early issues include Al Williamson, Sam Glanzman, Joe Sinnott, and Rich Buckler... DC's next offering in their growing line of statues is a stunning *Joker Statue*, slated for release this fall in time for holiday gift-giving... Caliber has a Moebius miniseries on schedule for release in 1996... Following up on the surprise addition of *Spawn PowerCards* to the Caliber Game Systems PowerCardz line, Caliber has announced that they'll be offering *Youngblood PowerCards*, featuring art by Rob Liefeld and others; the cards will be available in \$9.95 50-card starter decks and \$2.99 15-card booster packs—and like spawn, the game can be played as a stand-alone game, in conjunction with *Spawn*, or with the full *PowerCards* system... Zoe Rochelle, formerly editor in chief of Dark Moon Productions, has announced that she is leaving that company and taking her comic *Rare Breed* to her new imprint, Chrysalis Studios... Coming up in the growing line of Marvel-DC crossovers is a *Batman-Captain America WWII* Elseworlds one-shot produced by John Byrne... Not only are they both equally unbelievable at times, but now comics and pro wrestling have something else in common: Big Bang Comics' *Knight Watchman* is not only a comic book title, but it's also the name of a pro wrestler based on that character, courtesy of Big Bang and Windy City Wrestling Promotions... Don't miss out on those *Bernie Wrightson Aliens* stories in *Dark Horse Presents* #s 101-103; they act as a prequel of sorts to the upcoming *Batman-Aliens* crossover, also illustrated by Wrightson... Look for a new Spider-Man costume, incorporating elements of Spidey-suits new and old, during the transition from Peter Parker to Ben Reilly... Jim Valentino's Silver-Age *Shadowhawk* guest-stars in Big Bang #8, making this the first official Image/Caliber crossover story...

This Castle Is Wired For Electricity

Well, if you were one of the few who thought that Frank Castle was going to be the Marvel character who died in the climax of the *Over the Edge* storyline, the presence of *Punisher #1* starring Frank Castle on the Marvel September book lists should convince you otherwise. Don't assume that Castle's going to be around for a long time, though; in this dramatic premiere issue by John Ostrander, Tom Lyle, and Chris Ivy, Frank



Castle is sentenced to death by electrocution. Doc Samson, the Avengers, and Bullseye are all on hand to witness the execution—but if they're electrocuting Frank in the middle of the first issue, then isn't this going to be the shortest new-series launch in history? On September 28th, fans will find out if there's going to be a second issue! *Punisher #1*, a 32-page deluxe format comic with a metallic foil-stamped cover, is priced at \$2.95; once you pick it up, prepare to be shocked by what you find inside!

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Too Much Coffee Man's War On Caffe-Fiends Continues

Even if you've never read his comic books before, you're probably familiar with Shannon Wheeler's bizarre anti-hero because of his surprise appearance in a Converse shoe commercial. He's the hero whose profile looks like a real mug shot: Too Much Coffee Man, a defender who isn't afraid to face the real menaces to modern



©1995 Wheeler

life—caffeine and nicotine. And now, after his teevee debut, Too Much Coffee Man is returning to the comic book world that gave him birth in the fourth issue of his own series (if you missed the first three, don't worry—this ain't a continued saga or anything like that). *Too Much Coffee Man #4* is blurbied by writer/artist Wheeler as a "Special Love Issue," offering a cynical, darkly humorous look at the debilitating effects of that gentle emotion. Forget Camus and Kafka—if you want existential/absurdist philosophy with a particularly zany twist, try *Too Much Coffee Man #4*, a \$2.50 comic scheduled for mid-September release.

They Call Him Mellow Yellow

Get out the cake and the birthday hats—it's time for a celebration! Did you realize that it was exactly a century ago that the first comic strip debuted in America? William Randolph Hearst, looking for new features that would entice more readers into picking up his newspaper, brought in Richard F. Outcault to create an ongoing feature—a comic strip called "Hogan's Alley," featuring a bald-headed kid named Mickey Dugan who went everywhere in his yellow nightshirt. Readers came to know him as The Yellow Kid, and they made his exploits one of the most popular features in the newspaper. Soon, other comic strips were created to take advantage of the popularity of this new medium, and comics were born.



Alas, while many of the strips from the early days of comics are still around, The Yellow Kid isn't; Outcault's strip, while immensely popular, came to an end after a few years and has subsequently been forgotten by most comics fans. Historians have always remembered Outcault and the Yellow Kid, though—as did the US Postal Service, who chose the Yellow Kid as one

of the characters to be featured on their comic strip centennial postage stamp series. And this fall, Kitchen Sink is inviting the perpetually cheerful kid to his hundredth birthday party as they reprint every one of his strips in *The Yellow Kid*, a 240-page volume edited by Bill Blackbeard and featuring an introduction by William Randolph Hearst III. The full-color volume will be released in both softcover (\$34.95) and hardcover (\$50.00); this is the first time that these strips have ever been reprinted in their entirety, making this a must-have for comics historians everywhere.

More X-citement for X-Files Fans

If only every FBI agent could be as popular as Fox Mulder and Dana Scully! The television series has graduated from cult favorite to one of Fox's most popular series; the comic book's early issues sold out so quickly that Topps had to reprint them to meet the demand; and every magazine that features Mulder and Scully on the cover sees an accompanying sales spike. So is it any wonder that Topps has



added several new X-Files items to its schedule, including not only the already-announced *X-Files Annual*, *X-Files Trade Paperback*, and *X-Files Trading Cards*, but an all-new *X-Files Comics Digest*. Each digest-sized bi-monthly issue features ninety-six pages of story, art, background info, and more; the first issue kicks off with "Big Foot, Warm Heart," a new story by Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard (the regular creative team for the comic) that takes Mulder and Scully to Washington state to investigate rumors that a hunter has trapped a Bigfoot and intends to release him on his private compound so that he and his friends can hunt him down. *X-Files Comics Digest #1*, a \$3.50 publication, is scheduled for September 14th release.

Riding Shotgun

She was once a warrior nun, until they cast her out because of her "unorthodox methods." That doesn't stop her from continuing her war against evil alongside Areala and the other warrior nuns, though—and that's just what she does in *Shotgun Mary*, a three-issue series spinning off from *Warrior Nun Areala*. Written by Herb Mallette and illustrated by Joseph Wright, the series takes Shotgun Mary to Diamond Bay, where an aristocracy of evil holds court. The full-color comic is being offered in two different formats: a standard color comic priced at \$2.95 and a deluxe comic polybagged with a CD soundtrack by the alternative rock band Pink Filth, priced at \$8.95. Both editions, which feature the same comic, are scheduled for mid-September release from Antarctic Press.

HUNT OR BE HUNTED.

TUOK. IN AUGUST.



35 & 36: BACK TO THE STONE AGE. TUOK VS. CAVEMEN.
BY TIMOTHY TRUMAN AND AARON LOPRESTI.

AUGUST HOT PICKS!

by cliff biggers

The summer's been a scorcher—and more than a little bit of that heat has been coming from comic shops, where a cornucopia of great reading can be found. With over seven hundred comics slated for release in this last month of the season, narrowing this list down to two dozen comics was tough to do—but we've scoured the lists and picked out the books that are sure to sizzle. And if that isn't enough, we also offer a sneak peek of the various reprint volumes, trading cards, and collectible card games that are sure to make the summertime heat just a little more tolerable.



ALLIANCE 1

(Image, \$2.50)

Jim Valentino goes cosmic again, and his fans are gonna love it! **The Alliance** is a grand interplanetary saga featuring superheroes galore in a milieu that evokes the grandeur of Star Wars and Valentino's run on Guardians of the Galaxy. Valentino built his rep on epic stories of this sort—and you can be sure that his many fans will be thrilled to see him return to his cosmic roots again!

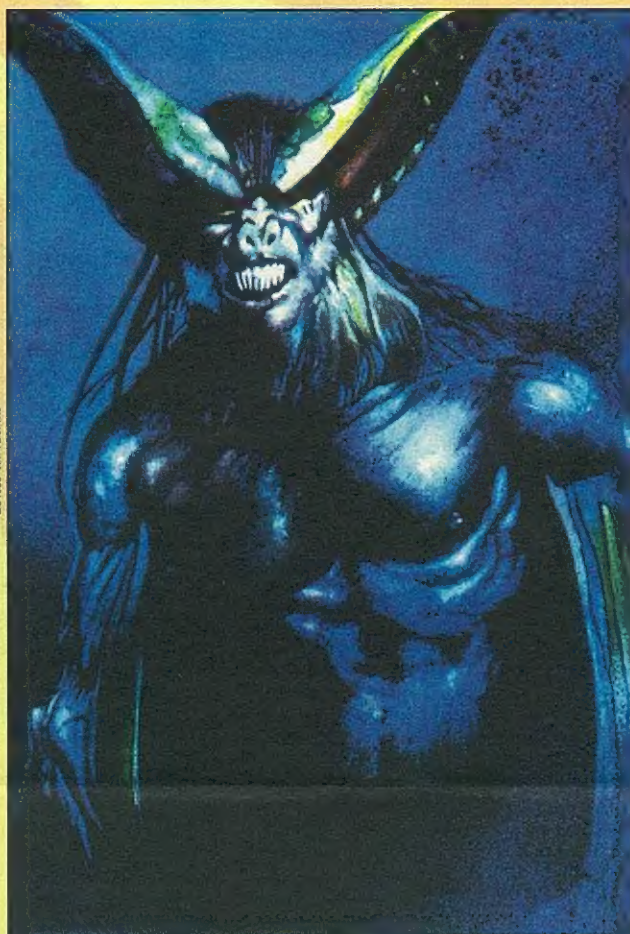
AVENGERS ULTRAFORCE 1

(Marvel, \$3.95)

ULTRAFORCE AVENGERS 1

(Malibu, \$2.95)

Superheroes galore in this two-issue multi-company crossover—and since Marvel owns both companies, there's an unheard-of level of cooperation that will result in major, continuity-affecting changes by the time this storyline is over. Glenn Herdling, Warren Ellis, Angel Medina, and George Perez handle the creative honors; Loki and the Infinity Gems supply the prerequisite nastiness; and the Godwheel is the setting for the conflict. This storyline, which will result in a few heroes emigrating into the other universe, also leads into Malibu's Black September multi-title event, making it a double must-have.



Venom out on the streets of Gotham, creating new addicts... because he suspects that supplier is his own father.

CAPTAIN AMERICA 444

(Marvel, \$1.50)

At long last, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel as Steve Rogers regains his Captain America glory under the aegis of Mark Waid and Ron Garney. Waid, whose revamp of The Flash made the title a fan-favorite, is ready to cast some of the same magic in **Captain America's** direction—and the addition of ace artist Ron Garney complements Waid's straight-ahead storytelling quite nicely. It's about time that Steve Rogers got back to the business of being the Marvel Universe's patriotic icon—and we suspect that a lot of other comic fans feel the same way!

DARK HORSE PRESENTS 100 #S 1-5

(Dark Horse, \$2.50@)

Five Dark Horse Presents #100's, one each week for the entire month...

BATMAN: MAN-BAT 1

(DC, \$4.95)

Any time John Bolton actually does a comic book story, it's a cause for celebration—so when John Bolton does a three-issue fully painted miniseries, it's a major event indeed! In this Elseworlds series, Man-Bat sets out to transform humanity into something more man-battish... but as you might suspect, Batman has some philosophical problems with this plan. Jamie Delano's story would be a great read no matter who the artist is—but when the artist is John Bolton, the result is a book no Bat-fan can do without.

BATMAN: VENGEANCE OF BANE II—REDEMPTION

(DC, \$3.95)

The last time Bane appeared in his own one-shot (also a **CSN Hot Pick**, we'd like to remind you), the book turned out to be one of the sleeper hits of the year. Well, now he's back—and hopefully you've learned your lesson! The last time Bane confronted Batman, he was dependent on the drug Venom; this time, he's drug-free, trained to perfection, and ready for a rematch. He's also ready to track down the supplier who's been putting

over two dozen top creators, including Mike Mignola, Bernie Wrightson, Paul Chadwick, and Frank Miller... the return of such popular features as Black Cross and Hellboy... the only mystery about these five comics is how many hours it's going to take them to sell out!

I-BOTS 1

(Tekno, \$1.95)

The concept is Isaac Asimov's, but it's



Howard Chaykin, Steven Grant, and George Perez who have taken on the challenge of turning that concept into a successful comic book. Chaykin fleshed out Asimov's ideas, Grant turned them into comic book stories, and Perez supplied the stunning artwork for this tale of manufactured heroes and the company who hopes to use them for its own purposes... if it can regain control of them, that is. The I-Bots have other plans, though! **I-Bots** is the most auspicious Tekno debut to date, combining top-notch concepts with an all-star creative team; look for this one to have a very short shelf-life!

KABUKI COLOR GALLERY

(Caliber, \$2.95)

David Mack's black-and-white success becomes a bit more colorful in this star-artist showcase featuring a variety of interpretations of the sensuous assassin. Contributors include Colleen Doran, Tim Bradstreet, Kyle Hotz, Dave Johnson, Vince Locke, Guy Davis, and Kabuki maestro David Mack himself in a oneshot that's sure to sizzle.

KURT BUSIEK'S ASTRO CITY 1

(Image, \$2.25)

The mastermind of **Marvels** turns his attention to his own superhero universe in this new series. Busiek is still working with Alex Ross, who supplies the character designs; he's added a new partner in artist Brent Anderson, who stylish linework captures the realistic, human feel of Busiek's story. Fans of **Marvels** and **Watchmen** are sure to love this series that looks behind the costumes and the conflicts to explore the humanity underneath the gaudy colors. For more about this hot new comic, see the article on page 7.



LADY DEATH IN LINGERIE

(Chaos!, \$2.95)

With that title, do we have to say any more?... Okay, we'll mention that the list of contributors includes Bill Tucci, Joe Quesada, Jim Balent, Ben Dunn, Kyle Hotz, Paul Pelletier,

Michael Bair, and Lady Death artist Steven Butler. Maybe you'd better camp out in front of your local comic shop for this one!...

METAL MILITIA 1

(Entity, \$2.50)

He's the product of secret government experimentation, a well-honed killer trained by an agency that no longer has any use for him. Now he's a man without a purpose... except for his single-minded desire to hunt down the killer responsible for the death of his only friend. He's Tommy Balazzar, aka Metal Militia, the latest creation of Hoang Nguyen (a familiar name to fans thanks to his work on Punisher and Warstrike). **Metal Militia** is Entity's first major new work from an established talent... but we have a feeling it won't be the last! The Jae Lee cover is frosting on an already appealing cake—but hey, we like frosting!...

NEW GODS 1

(DC, \$1.95)

Apokolips Now, courtesy of Tom Peyer, Rachel Pollack, Luke Ross, and Brian Garvey. Jack Kirby's acclaimed creation, now recognized as one of the seminal series of the 1970's, is back in a new incarnation—but the quintessential struggle between good and evil, parent and child, tyrant and servant still continues. Darkseid's up to his usual perfidy—this time he's going straight to the Source in his quest for absolute power—and it's up to his son, Orion, to stop him, before New Genesis faces some very dire revelations indeed. The adventure is epic—but what else would you expect from a Kirby-inspired comic?!



OMNI COMIX 3

(Penthouse, \$4.95)

The THUNDER Agents are back! Paul Gulacy, Mark Texeira and others contribute to this hefty magazine, but the reason for all the excitement is the 35 pages of all-new THUNDER action. Ever since it was first announced over a year ago that George Caragone was reviving the classic Tower

heroes, fans have been wondering when it was going to happen; wonder no longer, because you can already hear the THUNDER on the horizon!

OUTCAST SPECIAL 1

(Acclaim/Valiant, \$2.50)

Norm Breyfogle sets off a Birthquake after-shock as he teams up with Jesse "Hurricane" Berdinka to introduce a new hero into the Valiant Universe. He was once an alien trapped on a planet of primitive primates; he never imagined when he merged his DNA with those protosimians, though, that the next time he saw the world through his own eyes the primates would have given way to human beings



and he'd find himself a stranger in a very strange land... This one-shot will pave the way for an Outcasts series later this fall, so savvy fans will pick this one up so that they can remain ahead of the crowd.

SAVAGE DRAGON 22

(Image, \$2.50)

TMNT-SAVAGE DRAGON CROSSOVER

(Mirage, \$2.75)

The meeting of the green, phase two: once again, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and the Savage Dragon are joining forces, this time to do battle with one of the Turtles' old enemies, Complete Cabbage. It's nonstop action in the Erik Larsen tradition, with Erik supplying art for both books (working with Michael Dooney on the Mirage half of the two-parter). The last TMNT/Dragon meeting was one of the more entertaining crossovers of the past few years; look for this one to deliver more of the same excitement.

SHI-CYBLADE SPECIAL

(Crusade, \$2.95)

Shi's a woman... and boyoboy, what a woman! Cyblade's a woman, too—a well-armed, very deadly woman. And the two of them have joined forces to shut down the Corporate Monster who hopes to steal the very life-force of the world in which it dwells... unless the combined might of these two very independent warrior women can prevent it. And then there's that strange Sim-ian "Spirit of Independence" that inspires the two of them... Not only do you get no-holds-barred adventure, but you also get the sort of allegory that John Bunyan would be turning out if he were doing comics today.

A Cut Above the Rest

She's bold, she's beautiful, and she's wearing an ancient relic which she can barely control! **Witchblade** springs from the pages of the **Cyblade/Shi** crossover into her own series from Image Comics and Top Cow Productions! On the back cover: the *Star Wars* saga continues with Dark Horse's official adaptation of Timothy Zahn's best-selling novel *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire*!

Don't Miss the August Issue!

- Everyone's favorite blood-sucking bad girl from Draculon returns in Harris Comics' latest offering: **Vampirella Strikes!**
- How would you like to be in control of George Lucas's universe? Dark Horse Comics interviews the editors of its wildly popular *Star Wars* books to answer this question.
- "Excuse me while I kiss the sky." Kitchen Sink Press, with the help of writer Martin I. Green and artist Bill Sienkiewicz, presents **Voodoo Child**, a look at one of the greatest musicians of our time: **Jimi Hendrix**.
- Throw away your Magic Eight Ball! All the questions you've had about the Maxx, Julie, and those little ink

blot monsters will be revealed in **The Maxx #20**, from Image and Sam Kieth!

Previews Comics

- Things are starting to get nasty as the meanest bugs in the galaxy meet the hardened hunters from the stars in **Aliens vs. Predator: Booty!** A **PREVIEWS** exclusive!

Under the Reading Lamp

- Okay, he's a hired killer who will explode when he kills his mark... Sounds weird, huh? Take a closer look at Rob Schrab's **Scud: The Disposable Assassin**.

Exciting Editorial highlights:

- Acclaim Spotlight!**
- Dark Horse's Inside Track!**
- FPG Focus On...!**
- Viz Information!**

All this—plus the latest advance information on your favorite comics and collectibles—awaits you in the next edition of the industry's most comprehensive, colorful, and collectible monthly catalog—**PREVIEWS!**



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The excitement's inside a fine comics shop near you!



SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN 229

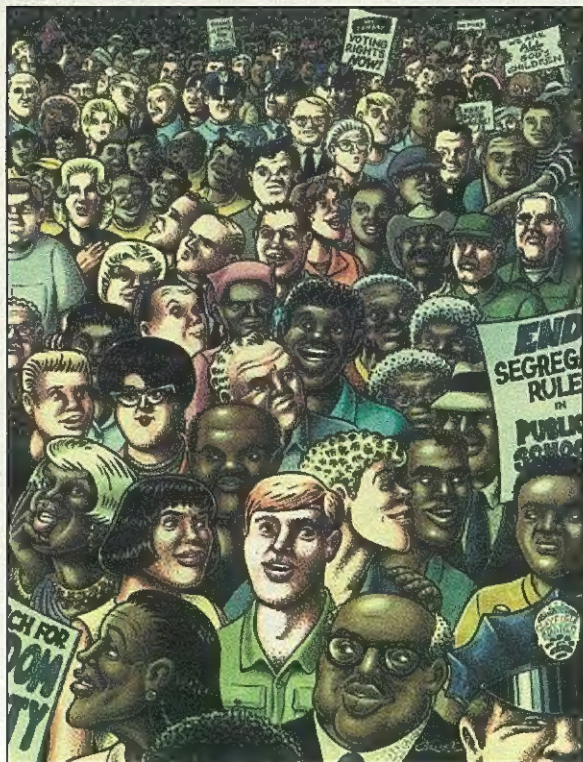
(Marvel, \$3.95/\$2.95)

Peter Parker picks a path of perfect pleasantries, forcing Ben to leave the life of Reilly and take over the role of Spider-defender of the Marvel Universe. Can it be? You betcha! In this landmark issue, Peter and Mary Jane set off on a quest for mundane bliss as the real Peter Parker grabs the baton, paving the way for a new era in Spidey-history. The clone storyline continues to shake things up—and judging from sales of the Spidey books, a lot of fans are intrigued by what they find inside these pages! Marvel's releasing both a deluxe and a standard version of this one—but whichever version you choose, it's the story that makes it a scorcher.

STUCK RUBBER BABY GN

(Paradox/DC, \$24.95)

If you thought the only important struggle for individual respect and dignity took place between mutants and Genoshans, then you really need to take a look at **Stuck Rubber Baby**. Howard Cruse's compelling, personal graphic novel is the story of a young man's coming of age during the civil rights movement of the 1960's; this adult tale focuses on race, sexuality, and individual dignity in one of the most turbulent eras in American history. This massive 224-page graphic novel is undoubtedly Paradox Press's most ambitious project to date; in its pages, Cruse presents a thought-provoking, frank, mature look at the value of the human spirit. Comics rarely aim this high—and when they strike the target as **Stuck Rubber Baby** does, it's a true must-read. The civilian media's going to rave about this one, too, so savvy fans will want to latch onto it early and be ahead of the crowd.



X-FILES ANNUAL 1

(Topps, \$3.95)

Stefan Petrucha and Charlie Adlard tell us all about Eve in this extra-length **X-Files** story. The medium has the message when Mulder and Scully call on a spiritualist to help them find out the truth about a bag of bones that just may be the remains of the female hominid who's the mama of the entire human race. The medium may be the only way they can find out why everyone else involved with these bones is rushing headlong into the spirit world on a one-way trip!... The recent **TV Guide** **X-Files** tale is attracting legions of new **X-Files** comics fans into comic shops, and an extra-length stand-alone story like this is just the thing they'll be looking for, so grab it while the grabbing's good!

TALES OF THE MARVELS: THE WONDER YEARS 1

(Marvel, \$4.95)

How does a girl deal with the death of a hero who meant more to her than any other hero in the Marvel Universe? That's a question that Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning, and Igor Kordey explore in this two-issue **Tales of the Marvels** fully-painted miniseries. The hero in question is Wonder Man, and the question this book attempts to answer is "can love conquer death?" If you want the answer, you'll have to pick up the series—and you'll undoubtedly have plenty of company.

WARRIOR NUN AREALA BOOK TWO 1

(Antarctic, \$2.95)

She's a nun on the run to the land of the rising sun as Warrior Nun Areala's war against evil and devilry takes her to Japan, where demonic spirits from the East are conspiring with devils from the West to take over the world of the living. As you might expect, there's martial arts action galore in this all-new full-color series by Ben Dunn—and if you remember how quickly the first series disappeared from the stands, you'll be practicing your comics-grabbing kata now so that you're ready for action when the book actually appears on the racks!



UNCANNY X-MEN 325

(Marvel, \$3.95)

X-MEN 45

(Marvel, \$3.95)

Get ready for a birthday party! It's been twenty years since the debut of the all-new, all-different X-Men (hard to believe that there was once a time the X-Men were so unpopular that their book was almost cancelled until the team was totally revamped, isn't it?), and Marvel's giving fans the presents. In this case, the presents are a pair of 48-page issues that offer storylines that fans have been clamoring for—namely the return of Colossus in the first book and the long-awaited confrontation between Gambit and Rogue in the second. And these two must-read tales are encased in two double-gatefold prismatic foil covers—because every birthday present should be wrapped in shiny paper, right?!

OVERLOOKED SIZZLER EXPLORERS 1

(Explorer, \$2.95)

It's rare that a first issue makes it into our Overlooked Sizzler feature, but a recent conversation with Terry Collins, writer of this fast-paced comic, made it clear that if the phrase "overlooked" ever applied anywhere, it applied here. In a marketplace reluctant to experiment with first issues from new companies, orders for **Explorers #1** were extremely light—but this is a comic that's very heavy on entertainment. Collins' story mixes Jonny Quest, Indiana Jones, and early Challengers of the Unknown to create a well-drawn adventure tale that outshines 90% of what's on the stands. **Explorers #1** certainly deserves suc-

cess; there's an audience out there just waiting for a book of this caliber... and you owe it to yourself to be a part of that audience!

SECOND CHANCE

Billi 99 TPB (Watermark, \$19.95) - A dark dystopian fantasy with an edge, courtesy of Sarah Byam and Tim Sale, available for the first time in several years.

Button Man: The Killing Game TPB (Kitchen Sink, \$15.95) - Crime ultranoir courtesy of John Wagner and Arthur Ranson in this story of hired killers turned loose on the English countryside for the amusement of the wealthy.

Collected Silbuster Volume 1 TPB (Antarctic, \$10.95) - single volume edition of the first four issues of this manga-anime style adventure.

Complete Bone Adventures Volume III TPB (Cartoon Books, \$12.95) - A veritable Boneyard, this trade paperback collects **Bone** #s 13-18 plus **Bone** #1/2 and the Bone tales from **Disney Adventures**.

Complete New Statesmen TPB (SQP, \$14.95) This series by John Smith, Jim Baikie, Duncan Fegredo, and Sean Phillips, praised as "the British **Watchmen**" when it was first released, offers a starkly realistic revisionist look at superheroes.

DC: A Celebration of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes HC (Little Brown & Co., \$40) - A lavish, loving look at the history of the first great comic book company, this is a must-have for any comics historian.

Mad About The Sixties: The Best of the Decade TPB (Little Brown & Co., \$19.95) - a cornucopia of comics and features from what has been arguably described as Mad's finest decade.

Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage TPB Volumes 1 & 2 (Acclaim/Armada, \$4.95@) - Two-volume series reprinting the entire Shadow Mage miniseries.

Predator: Race War TPB (Dark Horse, \$17.95) - Collected edition of Andrew Vachss-written Predator tale featuring Cross, soon to star in his own miniseries from Dark Horse.

Sandman: Preludes & Nocturnes HC (Vertigo/DC, \$29.95) - At long last, DC begins its eagerly-awaited program to offer all the early **Sandman** paperbacks in well-designed hardcover editions.

Shadowplay & Swordplay: Alex Toth Sketchbook TPB (Kitchen Sink, \$12.95) - A look inside the sketchbooks of one of the greatest designers and illustrators in the field.

Spider-Man Vs. Green Goblin TPB (Marvel, \$15.95) - Just in time for the Green Goblin's debut in his own series, it's a look back at classic Spidey-Goblin confrontations from various periods in Marvel history.

Superman/Doomsday: Hunter/Prey TPB (DC, \$14.95) - Collected edition of Dan Jurgens' and Brett Breeding's tale of the rematch between Superman and Doomsday on Apokolips.

Tarzan Volume 12 HC (NBM, \$35/\$60) - More classic Burne Hogarth reprints, available in standard and limited signed editions.

Tigers of Terra Book One TPB (Antarctic, \$9.95) - Reprinting very rare early issues of this Ted Nomura series.

X-Men: Magneto Returns TPB (Marvel, \$15.95) - Reprinting Chris Claremont and Jim Lee's story from **X-Men** #s 1-7.

IN THE CARDS

Bloom County/Outland Trading Cards (Krome, \$3/pack) - Chromium cards offering classic scenes from Berke Breathed's two acclaimed comic strips.

Fleer Aaahh! Real Monsters Trading Cards (Fleer, \$2.25/pack) - Ultra card series based on Nickelodeon TV series.

Fleer Ultra Fox Kid's Network Trading Cards (Fleer, \$2.25/pack) - Ultra card series based on various Fox Kids' Network series, including some Marvel favorites!

Fleer Ultra Waterworld Trading Cards (Fleer, \$2.95/pack) - Photo cards from Kevin Cosner aquatic extravaganza.

Julie Bell Fantasy Art Trading Cards

(Cardz, \$2.50/pack) - High quality art cards featuring a look at some of Bell's most fantastic pieces.

Other Worlds: Michael Whelan II Trading Cards (Comic Images, \$1.25/pack) - A new 90-card series featuring some of the best work by this award-winning artist.

Paul Chadwick Fantasy Art Trading Cards (FPG, \$1.79/pack) - The fantasy art of Chadwick complements his Concrete paintings in this high-quality art-card series.

Shi All-Chromium Trading Card Series (Comic Images, \$3.00/pack) - Stunning all-chromium card series featuring art by Shi creator Bill Tucci and others.

Star Trek: The Next Generation Season III Trading Cards (SkyBox, \$1.75/pack) - Photo cards from **STNG**'s third season.

X-Files Season One Trading Cards (Topps, \$2/pack) - Photo cards depicting the premiere season of this fan-favorite television series, supplemented by stunning art cards.

THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: THE BEST OF THIS MONTH'S COLLECTIBLE TRADING CARD GAMES

Battle Lords (\$7.95 starter, \$2.50 booster, from New Millennium) - SF game with art by Dave Johnson and others.

Chrysalis: Borne of the Supernatural (\$7.95 Starter, \$1.95 booster from Comico) - You can become a superhero in this card game with art by Jill Thompson, Tony Daniels, Walt Simonson, Dave Gibbons, and others.

The Crow (\$8.95 starter, \$2.95 booster from Heartbreaker) - Game based on film based on James O'Barr's cult-favorite comic.

Guardians (\$8.95 starter, \$2.75 booster from FPG) - Epic fantasy game with art by Keith Parkinson, Brom, James Warhola, Mike Ploog, and Don Maitz.

Legend of Five Rings (\$7.95 starter, \$2.50 booster from Alderac) - Fantasy game set in feudal oriental milieu.

Marvel Overpower (\$9.95 starter, \$3 booster from Fleer) - The Marvel Universe comes to card games in this deluxe series featuring a variety of starters and a cornucopia of booster cards to supplement the action.

Shadowfist (\$8.95 starter, \$2.50 booster, from Daedalus) - Martial arts card game.

Spawn PowerCardz (\$9.95 starter, from Caliber) - Todd McFarlane and others supply the art for this game, which can be played alone or in conjunction with PowerCardz game.

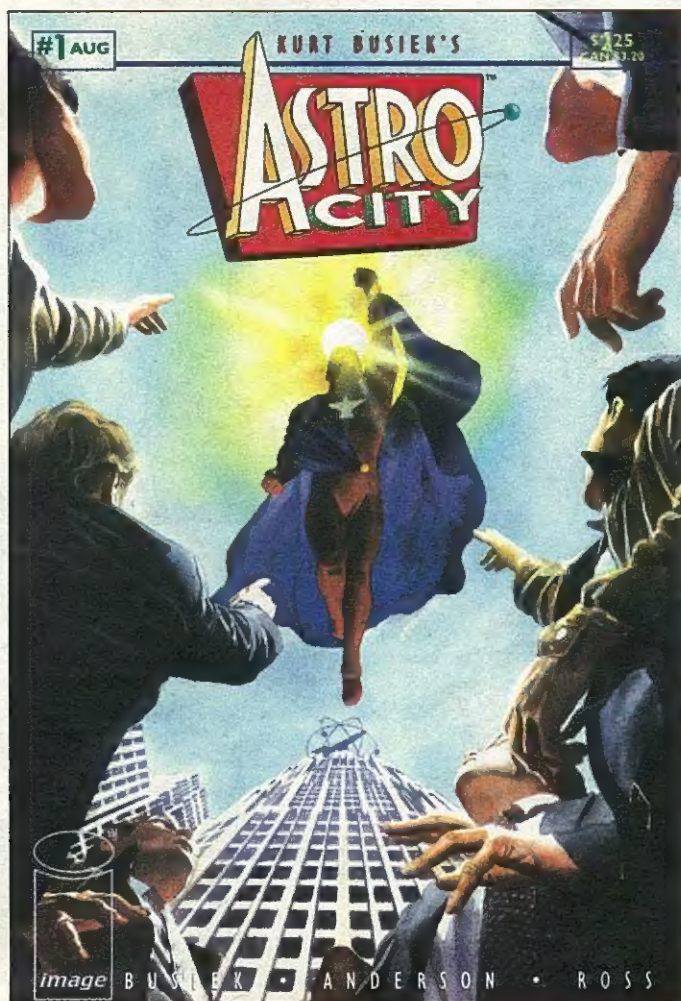
Star Quest: Regency Wars (\$8.95 starter, \$2.50 booster from Comic Images) - Science fiction card game featuring art by Frazetta, Hildebrandt, Whelan, and others.

Star Wars (\$10 starter, \$3.25 booster from Decipher) - Limited edition card game based on George Lucas' creation; an unlimited edition will follow next month.

WildStorm Expandable Game (\$9.95 starter, \$3 booster from WildStorm) - All the heroes in the WildStorm Universe are featured in this superhero card game.



Astro City Is KB's Toy



dle of this kind of this. As a result, I'm less concerned with showing you some super-stunt you've never seen before, and more concerned with making you understand what it would be like to be in the middle of a superhero battle, with death-rays sizzling by you and the ground rumbling and cracking. Or what it's like to be on the run, with a superhero chasing you, and he might be on that roof, or around that corner, or maybe right behind you. Most superhero series try to thrill you with what happens next—I want to make you feel like it's happening to you."

Astro City offers Busiek an opportunity to give a home to all the superhero and supervillains concepts that have come to him over the years but have gone unused. In this world, Busiek isn't just introducing a modern group of heroes; he's also introducing a world that was once home to an earlier group of heroes—sort of Astro City's Golden Age—whose careers influenced the direction of Astro City's modern defenders. And while the approach may sound similar to that of the *Marvels* series, Busiek stresses that this is something very different indeed. *Astro City* is an original concept, not a recasting of the sequel to *Marvels* that he had once considered doing—although he adds that "I still want to do that story somewhere, so it may come around in the future."

The first issue introduces the noble hero Samaritan, a man who finds his joy, like William Butler Yeats' Irish airman, among the clouds, flying like no normal human being can. "But his work as a

superhero never gives him time to enjoy it—he's on the go all day, saving lives, averting disasters, battling monsters... What would it feel like to be a guy like that—to be so busy saving others that you have no time left for yourself?..."

While readers may feel that the recognize certain superhero types in the characters of *Astro City*, Busiek warns readers not to look at this as a *roman à clef* tale. "We're not trying to recreate specific superheroes—we're trying to explore the genre by going back to the archetypes beneath lots of superheroes and creating new characters around those archetypes. Samaritan may have a cape and the power to fly, for instance, which makes him cosmetically similar to Superman, but he's not Superman, as readers of the series will discover. He taps into an archetype far older than Superman. Or a character like Cleopatra—is she Wonder Woman? is she Thor? Or is she simply a legend-based hero, like both Wonder Woman and Thor, and many others?"

The first six issues of *Astro City* will feature stand-alone stories told from a variety of viewpoints; this allows Busiek to introduce readers to his world, its history, its heroes, its villains, and its average citizens. Once this foundation is established, Busiek will explore longer storylines. Readers shouldn't expect to see a standard introduction to a core superteam in the first six issues, though. "We don't follow any one person or group throughout the series, as *Marvels* and *Watchmen* did—we see life in the city from various viewpoints," Busiek said, "which will mean that the highest-profile

characters will reoccur, just as you'd expect the Avengers and Spider-Man to crop up in a series set in Marvel's Manhattan—but the real recurring character is the city itself. None of the characters in the first issue appear in the second, for instance, except in a newspaper headline. A trio of guys in #3 show up in #4, but in the background. And characters from #1 and #4 take the spotlight in #6, and so it goes..."

While *Astro City* is most definitely an Image book, that doesn't mean that it'll immediately tie in to the Image Universe... although Kurt won't absolutely rule out the possibility that such a crossover might happen in the future. "I'd rather keep them to themselves for at least a while. I don't like to say 'never,' but I have no plans for *Astro City* to interact with anything else—even with characters I created myself that aren't part of the series."

Astro City reunites Busiek with his *Marvels* partner Alex Ross, who has done some design work for the series and is supplying the painted covers. The artwork for the series is supplied by Brent Anderson, with color work by Steve Buccellato, acclaimed colorist of *Generation X*. Each issue will offer 24 pages of story and art, a painted cover, and a back cover glimpse at Alex Ross's character designs. The first issue will also include a centerspread poster of the first issue cover painting by Ross.

Astro City #1, a \$2.25 comic, is scheduled for mid-August release—and unlike most cities, this one knows no limits!

by CLIFF BIGGERS

As a comic book reader and fan, Kurt Busiek was in awe of the amazing worlds and astounding characters featured in the array of four-color comics he enjoyed. As a writer, he conveyed that sense of wonder in the critically-acclaimed award-winning series *Marvels*, in which he and painter Alex Ross offered a vision of the Marvel Universe as seen through the eyes of an all-too-human photographer whose career parallels the birth of the superhero era. However, as free as Busiek was to offer his own interpretation of the development of the Marvel Universe, he was still limited by concepts created by others.

Now Kurt Busiek has his own toy to play with: a comic book world entirely of his own creation, with heroes, villains, and a history born from his imagination. And this August, Kurt is sharing his toy with others in *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*, a new series by Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson with designs by Alex Ross.

"Marvels gave you a single viewpoint on life in a superhero world," Busiek said. "*Astro City* continues that idea, but expands on it, showing readers a fantastic world like this through a succession of different viewpoints... We'll see *Astro City* through the eyes of superheroes, criminals, innocent bystanders—even through the eyes of an alien spy sent to pave the way for an invasion."

"I think the key thing that makes *Astro City* different is that most superhero books are about 'what happens'—what the plot is, what the danger is, what the cliffhanger is. *Astro City* is about what it feels like to be there, to be in the mid-



The Batmen who might have been.

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